

## CORRESPONDENCE

### DIANETICS

*To the Editor:*—With considerable anxiety I have watched the cult "dianetics" develop from the first appearance of its principles in *Science Fiction Magazine*. I am concerned about its growth and popular acceptance, and I fear that the world has had dumped on it a new therapy which will have the staying power of chiropractic, with as little scientific background to support it.

It is a phenomenon of some sort, and full of meaning, that over 500,000 copies of the book are supposed to have been sold. Countless persons, without proper background and without understanding of basic human motives and drives, are "auditing" each other, and as a result mental hospitals may receive as patients many whose first psychotic breakdown occurred during such "auditing." The "auditors" simply do not know how to handle the material elicited. The dangers inherent in such amateurish "auditing" are readily apparent. Since these persons cannot recognize an incipient psychosis, adequate treatment may be delayed, and delay, as pointed out in Bellak's book, "Dementia Precox," definitely reduces the chances for recovery or improvement.

In a short time there has developed a demand on the part of thousands of persons for training as professional "auditors." To meet this demand, I am informed, there have been established two training centers in the United States, in Elizabeth, N. J., and in Los Angeles. The course lasts one month, and tuition is said to be \$500. The initial Los Angeles enrolment was 1,000 persons, many having been turned away. An income of \$500,000 for the Dianetic Foundation in one month is certainly not bad. This, however, is only the beginning. There is being projected a Dianetic College or University, with a two year course, which will no doubt give graduates greater prestige.

Devotees of dianetics, like the devotees of cults, are not moved by unfavorable statements made by men of recognized scientific background. These fanatics support the new cult with a religious fervor. In vain have I shown them comments by scientific critics. One gets the same answers that have so often been heard from enthusiasts for other cults. For one thing, one hears that the medical profession is really a medical trust that is trying to keep out all forms of treatment but its own. The new cult is growing by the vigorous exploitation of testimonials. I have already listened to a testimonial of a cure of agoraphobia. Another person has reported that since he has been "audited" he is a better conversationalist. One woman I know is about to start being "audited" after listening to a testimonial by someone who had gotten rid of many "engrams" through dianetics. This dianeticized person claimed that her thinking had improved and hence her abilities as a stock market trader had become markedly sharper, the whole process resulting in her taking profits of \$13,000 within a few days. And so the testimonials go.

In Los Angeles the dianetics enthusiasts meet every Sunday morning in a theater to hear about the latest procedures and to listen to exegeses of the great book. As one would expect, the spirit of these meetings has the coloring that goes with religious zeal. At one of these meetings I saw one man get up and call attention to some contradictory phases of the teachings of the book. He was booed and hooted down, to the relief of the moderator. Professional "auditors" are setting up offices throughout the country and advertising for patients in the good old chiropractic way. Something should be done to expose irrefutably this nonsensical tomfoolery.

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### SULFONES IN THE CHEMOTHERAPY OF LEPROSY

*To the Editor:*—Johansen and Erickson, in their article entitled "Current Status of Therapy in Leprosy" in *THE JOURNAL* (144:985 [Nov. 18] 1950), give adequate information by reference or otherwise as to the origin and source of the compounds they used, except 4-amino,4'-beta-hydroxy-ethylaminodiphenylsulfone (HES). This compound was synthesized, studied and tested for activity in experimental tuberculosis for the first time in the laboratories of the National Institutes of Health by my associates and me (Smith, M. I.; Jackson, E. L.; Junge, J. M., and Bhattacharya, B. K.: *Am. Rev. Tuberc.* 60:62 [July] 1949; Smith, M. I.; Jackson, E. L., and Bauer, H.: *Ann. New York Acad. Sc.* 52:704 [Dec.] 1949). The compound was generously supplied by Merck & Company, Inc., through Dr. Augustus Gibson, who offered to make it in sufficient quantity to be available for clinical tests in tuberculosis and leprosy. The work on tuberculosis has been in progress for nearly one year and a half at Freedmen's Hospital, Washington, D. C., by Dr. Howard M. Payne and his associates.

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### LIVER PUNCTURE FOR DIAGNOSIS

*To the Editor:*—Ange Gabriel Maximé Vernois (1809-1877) in his thesis "Du diagnostic anatomique des maladies du foie, et de sa valeur au point de vue thérapeutique" (Paris, J. B. Baillière, 1844; Félix Malteste et Cie, 1844) discusses liver puncture biopsy for diagnostic purposes. Yet Vernois' early work is not mentioned in the many recent publications on liver puncture biopsy. Iversen and Roholm (1939), Luigi Lucatello (1895), W. E. King and his associates (*M. J. Australia* 1:697 [June 5] 1948), G. Pascale, T. Grier Miller, Chester M. Jones, Bingel and Olivet, McMichael and Sherwood (England), Jones and Volwiler (Boston), Schiff (Cincinnati), Edwin Rasberry (University of Pennsylvania), Winston K. Shorey and the many other writers have failed to give credit to Vernois for his early ideas and observations. Julian Hoffman and Julius Rosenthal (*Ann. Int. Med.* 33:1203 [Nov.] 1950) in their paper on liver biopsy, Buck (1949), Kumpe (1947), Hoffbauer (1947), and all other writers on the subject fail to mention Vernois' thesis.

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### SOCIALIZED MEDICINE

*To the Editor:*—Much theoretical tripe has been written about socialized medicine. Since the proof of the pudding is in the eating, the real test is how the system operates in actual practice. For those near-sighted members of our profession who still insist that socialization of medicine will cure all our problems, both imaginary and real, the following excerpt from a letter just received from a fellow practitioner in England may be instructive.

"You are fortunate indeed I imagine, in America, in that you do not labour under nationalised medicine as we do. One's every activity is checked and rechecked by a horde of highly paid clerks who have arisen overnight and who delight in sitting on the doctor's back. It is very discouraging, as these are the people who earn the money, and being usually people of little education are pleased to wield their new authority on any matter, medical or otherwise.

"You will detect that I am a man with a grievance but I am still clinging to my interest in blood transfusion work. I do not suppose you know of any openings for Englishmen in blood transfusion in the United States? If you do I should be very interested to hear from you again."

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